



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 23, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

High Commissioner Ekeus, it is a great pleasure to welcome you back to the Permanent Council. Thank you for providing us with your comprehensive report on your recent and planned activities.

We believe the OSCE places an important role in addressing national minority-related issues in participating States and we appreciate the excellent work you do in this area. Your efforts to promote social integration, training in various local languages, and ensure adequate representation of all ethnicities in the political and judicial areas help forge more stable relations between ethnically diverse regions and communities.

We welcome your efforts in the Balkans, and in particular your initiation of a process of reconciliation in Kosovo. A great need exists to take the matter of reconciliation forward for the benefit of all communities in Kosovo. Your meeting last month in Stockholm to promote reconciliation in Kosovo was useful. We encourage similar meetings in 2007 as you have proposed. We believe that these efforts support and complement the efforts of the international community to reach a settlement that will provide Kosovo with a stable, multiethnic future.

The United States continues to support strongly your engagement in Central Asia. We welcome your initiative to promote respect of minorities' linguistic and educational rights in Kazakhstan. We appreciate your efforts to enhance cooperation between the police and minorities in Kyrgyzstan. We support your efforts to promote multiethnic policing, which we believe firmly will strengthen stability and security throughout the OSCE community and beyond.

We also support your educational initiatives in Central Asia and are pleased to see that all five Central Asian states agreed to participate in next week's conference on "The Challenge of Educational Reform in Multiethnic Central Asia." We encourage all the Central Asian states to engage in the process of cooperation in the region on educational matters. We encourage strongly that you, Commissioner Ekeus, ensure that the participation of civil society, ODIHR, and other international organizations, in this and future conferences, be increased as this work progresses. These groups often have extensive experience and different perspectives that are necessary in order to develop successful and productive conferences.

We would like to thank you and your staff once again for effectively carrying out your mandate to provide early warning and early action in regard to tensions involving minority issues. Thank you for upholding the commitment of the OSCE to protect the rights of national minorities, to promote tolerance, and to encourage social integration. We will continue to support you and your office in pursuing minority interests throughout the OSCE community.

Thank you very much.